

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Saturday, September 16: Whooping Crane and Wildlife Festival, Lions Park, Necedah. For additional information visit [www.whooping-crane-festival.com](http://www.whooping-crane-festival.com)
- Saturday, September 30: National Public Lands Day at the Refuge
- Saturday, September 30: Volunteer Appreciation Picnic
- Friday, October 13: Wolf Prowl
- October 9-15: Welcome to the Refuge
- Friday, October 27: Night Hike – A Boo Hike Experience
- Saturday, November 4: Critter Day

## Calling all Callers

The Friends of Necedah National Wildlife Refuge will be hosting the annual Critter Day from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm on Saturday, November 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ellen Allan Learning Center. Turkey hunters and wildlife enthusiasts are encouraged to attend and compete in a turkey, owl, and whooping crane calling contest. Other activities consist of craft activities, nature hikes, aquatic invertebrate sampling, bird watching, wildlife tracking, nature photography, and food. All ages welcome to the free event.

NECEDAH NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE  
W7996 20th St. West  
Necedah WI 54646

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year spearheading the possibility of bringing a visitor center to the refuge. A visitor center is a huge need here, where I routinely have to turn away schools because of a lack of indoor facility space, and bathroom needs. Facility space is an ever-growing concern for the increasing visitation the Refuge sees annually.

Volunteers are our nation's greatest resource. They are as precious as the new whooping crane chicks, reliable like turkey vultures showing up to roadside kill, and devoted to the longevity of the resource. Refuge volunteers come packaged with a variety of skill sets, ages, and dedication. There is no age limit. Nor is there a time limit as to the number of hours you can contribute in a given week. Available projects include staffing the information desk, assisting in school programs, trail development and improvements, refuge cleanups, curriculum development, and assisting in special events. Training is always provided along with time to explore the resource. As I always say, the benefit of volunteering is that you'll gain a friend. So, as you reflect on this newsletter of the happenings at the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge take a moment and evaluate your situation. We can fix you up with a unique opportunity. You can befriend a friend.

## Photo Contest Coming!

We're giving you a chance to show off your photography skills during the 2006-07 Friends Photo Contest. Details will be available starting in September on the Friends web site, at the Friends booth at Cranefest, and in the refuge office.

Wild

# Notes

from the National Wildlife Refuge System

## Necedah National Wildlife Refuge Fall 2006

### Wetland Restoration Update

By Bill Peterson

2006 is an exciting year for Refuge wetland restorations. Spring runoff filled 2005's "Danielson Ditch Wetland Restoration Project" and black terns nested there for the first time. The water level has dropped during this unusually dry spring and summer, but we expect dramatic changes in future, wetter years as the invading brush and trees drown, creating new sedge meadows and open marshes.

In late July, Refuge volunteers Roger Bean and Larry Schmidt, with financial support from Ducks Unlimited, Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, and The Friends of Necedah Refuge, will begin the "West Boundary Wetland Restoration Project". Roger and Larry will plug two drainage ditches between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Aves., restoring 42 acres of formerly drained wetlands.

If time and funding permit, we also hope to begin the "Danielson Ditch Wetland Restoration Project Phase II" located one mile north of the original Danielson project. Seven ditch plugs along two drainage ditches will restore a beautiful 153 acre wetland complex.

We're strategically planning to restore many additional drained Refuge wetlands in the coming years, so please stop by the Headquarters for updates and be sure to explore these areas during your next visit.



### Whooping Crane Project Update

Larry Wargowsky, Refuge Manager

The big historic event has finally occurred; a pair of whooping cranes has successfully hatched offspring in the wild at the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. On June 22, at 1 pm, Fish and Wildlife Biologist Richard Urbanek notified Refuge Manager, Larry Wargowsky that a whooping crane pair was off their nest and tramping vegetation in the nearby marsh which was a good indication they had hatched young. Years of hard work by the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership had paid off with the first successful reproduction from whooping cranes in the wild in over 100 years in the Midwest and the first successful reproduction in the wild from reintroduced migratory whooping cranes in the eastern U. S.

The successful parents, whooping crane number 11-02 and number 17-02 were from the second year of the reintroduction project using ultralight aircraft to train them to learn the migration route from Wisconsin to Florida. The parents were a testimonial to persistence as this was the pairs' third attempt. In 2005, as three year olds, they attempted to nest, laying one egg which was destroyed one evening, possibly by a predator while they were off the nest. This spring they attempted incubating for awhile, however, something happened to their eggs and they were unsuccessful for a second time.

Renesting with incubation starting on May 23<sup>rd</sup> paid off, with a successful hatch after 30 days. The two chicks are not totally in the clear from predators and other possible risks that occur in the wild. Whooping cranes usually successfully reproduce at 4-7 years of age and this pair at 4 years is very young and inexperienced. Hopefully, they can protect and practice good parenting behavior this early in their life.

There will be 18 birds to be trained to follow ultralights this year. This includes one bird from a salvaged egg from the whooping crane pair that nested on the Refuge this spring. They left the nest unattended for an extended time period subjecting the eggs to a possible predator. The birds are divided into three groups called cohorts according to their age and are trained at three separate training sites on the Refuge similar to previous years and combined prior to departure in October. There are

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also 5 birds for the Direct Autumn Release program or DAR birds this year. They are also on the Refuge at a separate location being cared for by costumed bird handlers and will be released with older whooping cranes in the fall to learn the migration route south.

We currently have 61 older whooping cranes in the wild from the previous five years of the project plus the two new offspring, bringing the total to 63 birds in the wild. There were no fatalities during the winter or during the migration this spring. However, two fatalities have occurred off the Necedah Refuge this summer: one occurred at the Meadow Valley Wildlife Area; one in the Sandhill State Wildlife Area, and one in the Refuge. All three areas had low water due to the drought with predators being the probable cause of the fatalities.

Ultralight training occurs every morning at sunrise, weather permitting until they start their migration to Florida in October. The best viewing opportunity is available to the general public from the observation deck near the Headquarters off Highway 21 west of Necedah. There are also limited opportunities to participate in guided tours at certain times throughout the summer and the annual Whooping Crane Festival, which has guided bus tours all day, Sept. 16.

There is a lot to celebrate with the success of this reintroduction project as there are already 63 birds after only five years of the project and possibility of adding 23 more birds this year. The birds have shown they can successfully reproduce in the wild and have numerous pair bonds established for hopefully excellent reproduction in future years. The success of the project is a testimonial to the power of the use of multiple partners through

## Belski wins Award

On Tuesday, July 18, 2006 Tate Fischer, Refuge Fire Management Officer, presented Mike Belski, Lead Range Technician, a limited edition firefighter statue crafted by artist Joyce Killebrew. Mike received this award for safely and efficiently overseeing operations of the fire and hazardous fuels programs in the absence of a Fire Management Officer or Prescribed Fire Specialist position. Congratulations Mr. Belski!!



## From the Fireline

By Tate Fischer

Wildland firefighters from the Necedah Refuge have been busy both locally and nationally. Shortly after the normal prescribed fire season in May, Mother Nature turned off her faucet and pushed the local area (Monroe, Adams, and Juneau Counties) even further into precipitation deficit. This long-term drought, added to the festivities of the summer vacationing, has sparked numerous wildfires in the local area causing Refuge firefighters to increase wildfire vigilance. Refuge fire personnel urge you to use caution with campfires and be aware of local burning regulations.

On a larger scale, Necedah Refuge firefighters have again been "called to duty" to respond to what has become known as "wildfires on the western front". For 14-18 days, several individuals from the refuge fire crew spent long hours fighting wildfires in Utah, Arizona, Oregon, Montana, and Nevada. Even though these courageous young men and women are hired locally, as employees of the US Government, they are a national resource and often called upon in times of emergency. This year, national wildfire activity started earlier than normal leading refuge firefighters to believe they "are in for the long haul".

## Restoring Wetland Hydrology

By Rich King

In an attempt to drain and eventually farm the land that would become Necedah Refuge, steam-powered dredges chewed their way through the central Wisconsin landscape, leaving nearly eighty miles ditch in their wake. Drainage was completed early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Odd peaces of coal lying on the sandy banks of the drainage ditches as well as acres of drained wetlands serve as dramatic reminders of how the combination of development pressure and technology can affect the land.

Damaged for nearly 100 years, the Necedah Refuge staff is now reclaiming the natural hydrology of those areas affected by drainage. These projects take the form of plugs in location where drainage ditches run through sand ridges and drain large sedge meadow complexes. Building the plugs is relatively easy with soil from sand ridge being pushed into the drainage ditch with bulldozers. Although the plugs don't appear noteworthy, their impact on the hydrology of the once-drained sedge meadows is dramatic. The Refuge completed its first ditch plugs last fall on the northern end of the Refuge. Surveys this spring indicate an immediate response. The water table in these areas has risen and as a result bird species like sedge wrens and black terns are now found in the areas as are plant species like bladderwort. Surveys conducted prior to the restoration indicated that these species were absent from the area as they most likely had been for the past 100 years.

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## Friends of the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge

### Notes from Jan

Jan Crosby - President

History was made on June 22, 2006 at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge with the hatching of two whooping crane chicks. These Chicks prove that the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership reintroduction project works!

This historic event will attract thousands of visitors to Necedah NWR. As we have been discussing with you, the current facilities cannot accommodate the influx of expected visitors. While we were not able to get our request for appropriations funded in the FY07 budget, we must continue our quest.

Your support is needed to contact Senator Kohl to encourage him to use his influence on the Senate Appropriations Committee to advocate for funds for a new visitor's center through the coming year. Currently, Necedah NWR ranks #1 in the Fish & Wildlife Service Region 3 and #13 nationally for new visitor's centers. I'll be discussing this with you throughout the year with specific actions for you to take.

The Friends Gift Shop has a new look and is planning some new exciting products for you. We plan to unveil these items in time for the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Whooping Crane & Wildlife Festival September 16, 2006. We hope you will visit the Friends booth at the festival and say hello.

We are in the process of developing a web site and are excited to be able to increase our ability to better communicate with you. Check out [www.friendsofnwr.org](http://www.friendsofnwr.org) and watch our progress. We're under construction and the finished project will be worth the wait.

Do you enjoy taking pictures of your favorite things and places? The Friends of Necedah will be sponsoring a Refuge Photo Contest to allow you to share the photos you take on the Refuge. The details will be available in the next few weeks so be on the lookout for details.

I hope your summer vacation plans include a visit to the Refuge. Things are moving forward and we enjoy sharing with you. We invite you to become active by volunteering at the refuge and sharing this newsletter with your friends and family. I look forward to seeing you on the Refuge.

Jan Crosby, President  
Friends of Necedah NWR

### Need A Friend?

Daniel Peterson

Looking for someone to chum with or share a laugh? Do you seek someone to enrich your life as well as make a difference in the world you live in? Have you heard about the health benefits volunteering can have? One benefit is that you'll gain a friend.

There is something said about having a friend; they are priceless, hardly ever useless, and someone you can rely on. In a time when the world sometimes seems to be full of hate there are people that influence a better side of reality. My arrival to Necedah eleven months ago is a testament to how good Midwestern citizens are; how much they depend on one another for life, good times, and reliability when you need help. Recent studies suggest that if Americans want more friends they should move to the Midwest. Some people believe the hospitality here is a reflection of the homesteader era of the 1860's when pioneers clung to their closest neighbor for help and companionship while improving their land.

The word *friend* as defined in a Webster's Dictionary is a person who is attached to another by affection, regard, or as a supporter. What makes the refuge operate successfully is the affection the staff and volunteers give to the resource. What makes the Friends of Necedah National Wildlife Refuge (a volunteer organization) operate successfully, is the support they provide to refuge staff and volunteers for the conservation of habitat, protection of the resources, and recreational opportunities for the public. This group of friends along with the Refuge volunteers have earned and will forever earn the staffs affection for being good stewards, citizens, and friends of this place we call Necedah Refuge.

Nationwide, during the last year, nearly 38,000 volunteers donated more than 1.4 million hours to the National Wildlife Refuge System. The dollar value of these volunteer hours exceeds well over \$15 million.

It was a volunteer, Ding Darling, a political cartoonist with an eye toward conservation, who was instrumental in the effort to establish the Sanibel National Wildlife Refuge in 1945 (it later was renamed in 1967 in honor of Darling as the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge). Since then, the Wildlife Refuge System has grown to include over 500 Refuges protecting more than 93 million acres of precious public land for wildlife habitat. Volunteers work to provide assistance to all Fish and Wildlife Service programs, and they are ambassadors to the communities in which they live and work.

At the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, volunteers have donated over 900 hours to the Refuge so far this year. In addition, the Friends Organization has clocked more than 500 hours this

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